

## **PREFACE**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Hamilton area, like much of Loudoun County, experienced strong residential growth in the 1990's. During the development of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton and UGA (1995 Hamilton Plan) residential growth pressures were expected to continue into the second half of the decade. Based on the large land area within the Urban Growth Area (now known as the Joint Land Management Area, JLMA) and residential density assumptions of up to four units per acre, the population growth projections in the 1995 Hamilton Plan estimated a doubling of the population. The 1995 Hamilton Plan policy stressed management of the growth such that the Town would not be strove to achieve a balance between managing growth and maintaining the inherent qualities that characterized the Town and the larger Hamilton community.

Subsequent to the adoption of the 1995 Hamilton Plan, the Town conducted a sewer service study. The study highlighted the fact that there is, and will continue to be, limited capacity at the Hamilton sewer plant. The Town considered this information in tandem with the development potential in the Urban Growth Area (UGA). Based on the limitations of utility capacity, the Town decided to recommend to the County a reduction in the size of the designated UGA. A Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM 2000-0002) was approved which reduced the UGA to its current boundaries. The revised Hamilton Plan has been updated to address this change and the policies more strongly stress the importance of achieving and maintaining a balanced and sustainable land use pattern.

As revisions were being considered for the Hamilton Plan, community meetings helped identify issues important to the citizens. On January 17, 2001, the County sponsored a community forum as a vehicle for members of the Hamilton community to talk about community issues. Participants were asked about the positive attributes of living or working in Loudoun County as well as their concerns and the participants primarily focussed their comments on Hamilton issues.

Strengths that were identified included an appreciation for the small-town feel and sense of community in the Hamilton area. Also noted were the small-school environment; a good quality of life; and an open feeling due to abundant open space, natural resources, and surrounding farmland.

Some concerns or challenges that were identified included threats to water quality, fear of losing the small-school and small-town atmosphere, excessive traffic speeds, and better pedestrian connectivity.

Many of the strengths and weaknesses cited in the 2001 forum were similar to those cited in the public forums that were held to garner citizen input for the 1995 Plan. However, the vision has shifted from that of trying to manage growth within a larger, expanded UGA (or JLMA), to that of trying to preserve the quality of development and quality of life within a smaller community sphere.

## **PROCESS FOR UPDATING THE NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

During 2000-2001, the Hamilton Planning Commission began a five-year review of the 1995 Comprehensive Plan, as required by the Code of Virginia. The Hamilton Planning Commission determined that factors such as changing demographics, new development, local and regional transportation and public infrastructure requirements and challenges, environmental concerns, and the overall growth of the County all contributed to the need for a full revision of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Input for this Plan was provided by the Citizens Advisory Committee, a group of more than thirty Town and JLMA residents tasked to examine all aspects of community life and develop recommendations for the future. Citizen comments recognized that while the vision of growth for Hamilton and the surrounding area is now scaled back from the vision of 1995, the Plan should continue to focus on maintaining and enhancing the characteristics and qualities that embody the Hamilton community. Those qualities include a safe community that effectively manages vehicular and pedestrian traffic; a community that maintains its close-knit residential feel; preservation of historic character; respect for natural resources; and a revitalization of the core commercial area in the center of town.

With the input and recommendations of the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Hamilton Planning Commission conducted more than 20 work sessions, over 9 full committee meetings, an open house and a public hearing to revise the 1995 Plan. This draft was forwarded to the Town Council in the summer of 2001.

The draft was circulated to civic associations, business organizations, boards and commissions, and interested individuals for comment. In the late summer of 2001, the Town Council forwarded the draft to the County to begin a joint review process.

A Joint Review Committee composed of members from both the Hamilton and County Planning Commissions was convened in August 2002 to review the draft prepared by the Hamilton Planning Commission. The Joint Review Committee met during the fall of 2002 to review the draft.

## **PLAN SUMMARY**

The Introduction provides a broad picture of the purpose and basis of the Comprehensive Plan, the relationship of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton and JLMA with the County's Revised General Plan, as well as the setting and history of the Town of Hamilton.

The Comprehensive Plan contains ten topical chapters that provide detailed background information on Population and Growth, Land Use, Community Facilities and Services, Natural Resources, Transportation, Housing and Community Development, Economic Development, Historic and Cultural Resources, Annexation, and Implementation. These sections also articulate goals, policies, and actions to guide the Town in its progress toward protecting and enhancing the Town's identity and distinctive character.

While the plan is organized into functional topics, there are many horizontal threads that form its fabric. Key among these are the goals established throughout this Plan to:

- **Achieve a balanced and sustainable land use pattern that will retain Hamilton's historic, small Town character in a rural setting;**
- **Provide for the equitable, effective distribution of public facilities and services and implement preventative maintenance and physical and financial planning measures regarding existing and future infrastructure;**
- **Support the continuation of Hamilton Elementary School at its present site within the Town JLMA and support a competitive school system that reflects the Town's strong commitment to education;**
- **Uphold a high standard of environmental stewardship, promoting clean air and water and promoting effective tree, waterway and wildlife preservation standards;**
- **Provide safe and orderly flow of traffic in Hamilton and surrounding areas;**
- **Protect and enhance the Town's neighborhoods by discouraging cut-through traffic and create streets that are rural in nature (tree lined and/or landscaped) with attention to safety;**
- **Provide for safe pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle movement through the Town and surrounding area, by means of sidewalks/paths/trails that interconnect the Hamilton community;**
- **Encourage a range of quality residential development and redevelopment sensitive to the Town's interest in maintaining its character, being pedestrian friendly and providing parks and open spaces;**
- **Create and sustain commercial development within the core commercially zoned area in the center of Town;**

- **Create and stimulate a favorable climate for economic development, recognizing the intimate connection between economic prosperity and maintenance of high quality physical and social environments;**
- **Preserve and protect the Town's historic and cultural resources to maintain a unique sense of place and provide for increased social interaction;**
- **Protect the finite water resources by limiting additional usage to that which will ensure adequate clean water is available to present users and future new users; and**
- **Control type and rate of growth of residential and commercial development to ensure infrastructure can support without overloading.**

The role of government has changed dramatically over the past decade as Town leadership takes an entrepreneurial role to increase government effectiveness in making coordinated infrastructure and land use planning decisions. More than ever, effective government is closely tied to the well being of the community. The Town Council and Board of Supervisors strive to add a conscious, planned, qualitative aspect to growth, while ensuring that the cost of supporting infrastructure is offset by resulting benefits. The Comprehensive Plan provides a series of strategies to ensure that the Town and surrounding area continue to be positioned prominently among jurisdictions as an exceptional place to live, work and visit.

The Town of Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan and Area Management Plan is a policy and strategic guide for public decision-making. The Plan describes the community's historic, physical and social character, examines and responds to local and regional issues, and provides a blueprint for the future. The goals, policies and actions in the Plan describe a desired future for the Hamilton community and provide recommended paths for attaining that future state. For purposes of understanding the structure of each chapter in the Plan, these definitions are provided:

Goal – Object or end that one strives to obtain

Policy – Guiding principle used for decision-making

Action – A definitive act or activity that can be measured for completion

The Plan includes workable, responsible goals, policies and actions to encourage the creative cooperation among government, private organizations, and individuals that is necessary to build a modern community while showing reverence to the past.